UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1997/115
19 February 1997

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-third session
Item 5 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE REALIZATION IN ALL COUNTRIES OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS CONTAINED IN THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND IN THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, AND STUDY OF SPECIAL PROBLEMS WHICH THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FACE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THESE HUMAN RIGHTS

Contribution by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

[Original: English]
[17 February 1997]

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) wishes to submit the following to the Commission on Human Rights for information.

1. Under the auspices of FAO and with the support of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the World Food Summit took place in Rome from 13 to 17 November 1996 with the participation of heads of State and Government and other high-level delegates from 186 countries. The Summit adopted the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action, in which a separate Objective was dedicated to the right to food.

2. In the Rome Declaration on World Food Security it is stated at the beginning:

> "We, the Heads of State and Government, or our representatives, gathered at the World Food Summit at the invitation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, reaffirm the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger."

3. Under Commitment Seven, to implement, monitor and follow up the World Food Summit Plan of Action, Objective 7.4 is as follows:

"To clarify the content of the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, as stated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other relevant international and regional instruments, and to give particular attention to implementation and full and progressive realization of this right as a means of achieving food security for all.

"To this end, Governments, in partnership with all actors of civil society, will, as appropriate:

"(a) Make every effort to implement the provisions of article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the Covenant) and relevant provisions of other international and regional instruments;

"(b) Urge States that are not yet parties to the Covenant to adhere to the Covenant at the earliest possible time;

"(c) Invite the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to give particular attention to this Plan of Action in the framework of its activities and to continue to monitor the implementation of the specific measures provided for in article 11 of the Covenant;

"(d) Invite relevant treaty bodies and appropriate specialized agencies of the United Nations to consider how they might contribute within the framework of the coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system to the major international United Nations conferences and summits, including the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna 1993, within the scope of their mandates, to the further implementation of this right;

"(e) Invite the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in consultation with relevant treaty bodies and in collaboration with relevant specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations system and appropriate intergovernmental mechanisms, to better define the right related to food in article 11 of the Covenant and to propose ways to implement and realize these rights as a means of achieving the commitments and objectives of the World Food Summit, taking into account the possibility of formulating voluntary guidelines for food security for all."

4. The whole Plan of Action relates of course to the right to food and food security. Following are some excerpts of relevance to the work of the Commission:

(a) In the introduction to the Plan of Action:

"... 12. The implementation of the recommendations contained in this Plan of Action is the sovereign right and responsibility of each State through national laws and the formulation of

strategies, policies, programmes, and development priorities, in conformity with all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, and the significance and full respect for various religious and ethical values, cultural backgrounds and philosophical convictions of individuals and their communities should contribute to the full enjoyment by all of their human rights in order to achieve the objective of food security for all."

(b) Commitment One:

"We will ensure an enabling political, social, and economic environment designed to create the best conditions for the eradication of poverty and for durable peace, based on full and equal participation of women and men, which is most conducive to achieving sustainable food security for all."

(c) Objective 1.1:

"To prevent and resolve conflicts peacefully and create a stable political environment through respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, a transparent and effective legal framework, transparent and accountable governance and administration in all public and private national and international institutions, and effective and equal participation of all people, at all levels, in decisions and actions that affect their food security.

"To this end, Governments, in partnership, as appropriate, with all actors of civil society, will where not already accomplished:

"...

"(b) Develop policy-making, legislative and implementing processes that are democratic, transparent, participatory, empowering, ...

"(c) Promote and strengthen well-functioning legal and judicial systems to protect the rights of all people;

"(d) Recognize and support indigenous people and their communities ...

"..."

(d) Objective 1.3

"To ensure gender equality and empowerment of women. ..."

(e) Under Objective 1.4, Governments will, as appropriate:

"... (b) Enact or strengthen policies to combat discrimination against members of socially vulnerable and disadvantaged groups,

and persons belonging to minorities, with particular attention to their rights to land and other property, and to their access to credit, education and training, commercial markets and food security programmes. ..."

(f) Commitment Two:

"We will implement policies aimed at eradicating poverty and inequality and improving physical and economic access by all, at all times, to sufficient, nutritionally adequate and safe food and its effective utilization."

(g) Objective 2.2:

"To enable food-insecure households, families and individuals to meet their food and nutritional requirements and to seek to assist those who are unable to do so.

"To this end, governments, in partnership with all actors of civil society, as appropriate, will:

(a) Develop and periodically update, where necessary, a national food insecurity and vulnerability information and mapping system, indicating areas and populations, including at local level, affected by or at risk of hunger and malnutrition, and elements contributing to food insecurity ..."

(h) Commitment Four:

"We will strive to ensure that food, agricultural trade and overall trade policies are conducive to fostering food security for all through a fair and market-oriented world trade system."

5. The Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action is available from FAO and on the Internet at http://www.fao.org/wfs/homepage.htm.